

Tips for Protecting Community Pharmacists and Pharmacy Staff from COVID-19

Pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, student pharmacists, and other pharmacy staff are frontline responders to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staying protected and healthy while caring for patients is a top priority. Consider the following tips for workflow improvements that can decrease the risk of exposure to infected patients.

Prescription Orders and Refills

- Advise providers and patients to send electronic or telephone prescriptions only to avoid handling paper prescriptions.
- Do not handle or accept patient bottles for refills.
- Encourage patients to call in refills to avoid extended waiting at the pharmacy.
- Advise patients to have an ample supply of their medications to limit exposure by coming into the pharmacy.

Transactions

- All pharmacy staff handling money, cash, or credit cards should wear gloves.
- Request patients and caregivers use a credit card instead of the debit card function to avoid PIN input.
- Clean the credit card machine keypads between customers.
- CMS has suspended [Part D plan signature requirements](#); no signature is required.
- Maximize the use of drive-through, delivery service, and curbside pickup.
- Delivery personnel should wear gloves, and not enter the recipient's home.

Staff Considerations

- Wash hands frequently for 20 seconds with each washing, or use [hand sanitizer containing at least 70% alcohol](#).
- Immunizing pharmacists should don (put on) PPE when administering vaccines.
 - Note: Influenza and pneumococcal vaccines are strongly recommended during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the increased risk of serious secondary infection.
- Maintain social distancing when working within the pharmacy.
- Clean surfaces within the pharmacy regularly using [cleaners known to kill the virus](#).

Tips for Protecting Community Pharmacists and Pharmacy Staff from COVID-19 (continued)

Considerations for the Pharmacy

- Put physical barriers between patients and staff, such as shields at cash registers (e.g., plexiglass, clear shower curtains). CDC recommends that [barrier controls](#) are a good strategy, considering the current PPE shortage.
- When retail operations outside of the pharmacy must remain open, 6-foot standing distances (known as “social distancing”) should be established at check-out counters to assist with social distancing. Tape can be placed on the floor to mark the safe standing distance.
- Consider removing all customer seating to limit surfaces that may not be able to be cleaned and disinfected.
- Limit the number of individuals permitted inside at any one time to fewer than 10 people (including pharmacy staff) to facilitate social distancing.
- Please don't forget HIPAA privacy: the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\) clarified](#): “The protections of the Privacy Rule are not set aside during an emergency.”

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